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RECOGNIZING SOUTH AFRICA ON ITS FIRST TWO CONVICTIONS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey

I thank my good friend, the ranking member, for yielding, and thank her for being one of the cosponsors of the resolution, along with Carolyn Maloney and Kay Granger and others in this body. This is a bipartisan resolution that we present on the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, while the World Cup is a joyous and unifying event watched the world over, it comes at a very high cost for many women and children trapped in sexual slavery in South Africa. Going on right now, the World Cup is drawing an estimated 2.7 million local spectators and up to 500,000 visitors to the country. It is an honor and an economic boon for South Africa, but it is also a threat to vulnerable women and children--a threat that the government of South Africa is and must continue to aggressively combat.

Major sporting events, Mr. Speaker, and conventions that attract large numbers of people in the United States or abroad have been proven to result in an increase in the demand for

commercial sexual exploitation. Pimps and traffickers jump to respond to the demand by trafficking women and girls for prostitution to events such as the World Cup.

We have seen examples of this in stories coming out of South Africa in the media over the last several months. One taxi driver covered in a story proudly advertised his "Red Light Tour" which includes strip bar hopping and guidance to prostituted women less likely to be HIV-positive. He, like so many in the sex industry, is hoping to cash in on sexual tourism accompanying the World Cup. Sindiswa was just 17 years old, and according to Time magazine, didn't make it to the games. Forced into prostitution at 16 after leaving her impoverished village on a bogus promise of a job, she died of AIDS complications in January of this year.

Mr. Speaker, according to the U.S. Department of State, where prostitution is legalized or tolerated there is a greater demand for human trafficking victims and nearly always an increase in the number

of women and children trafficked into commercial sexual slavery.

In preparation for the World Cup, the Government of South Africa, to its credit, commissioned a comprehensive study of human trafficking within its borders and discovered that trafficking victims were brought in from all over the world--not just from neighboring countries where poverty and porous borders make women and children particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Law enforcement in Cape Town, for example, where some of the games are played, has been closely monitoring and tracking human trafficking. Over the last few months, Cape Town law enforcement noted a sudden increase in women arriving with falsified immigration documents from Asia, and they saw a sudden drop in the age of girls working the streets. I applaud Cape Town for its vigilance, as these were signs that criminal syndicates with the means and certainly the capacity were trafficking women and girls to the World Cup.

Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, I offered the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and its reauthorizations in 2003 and 2005. Our most recent TIP report, which is mandated by these laws, ranks South Africa as a Tier 2 country--a country that does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.

And so on behalf of my colleagues and I, we offer this resolution, H. Res. 1412, to congratulate South Africa for the steps it has taken--its first two major trafficking convictions and increased law enforcement activity, especially--in this all-important fight against human

trafficking. We offer H. Res. 1412 today to underscore the urgent need for further action and trafficking funding prioritization by the Government of South Africa. Of course, that admonishment should go to each and every one of us, including the United States.

While South Africa does not yet have in place a comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, it does have legislation that offers increased protection to children. It is my sincere hope that all levels of relevant government officials will be aware of their responsibilities under the anti-trafficking provisions of the Sexual Offenses and Children's Acts and the Children's Amendment Act of 2007, and that these will be fully funded and implemented by the Government of South Africa. As we all know as lawmakers, if the law goes unenforced, it is, frankly, not worth the paper it is printed on. That goes for any parliament's or congress' law. They need to implement this--and do so faithfully.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement must be particularly vigilant in protecting children during the World Cup through an expanded law enforcement presence and raids in areas where exploitation is occurring. Trafficked women and children rescued during the games must be given special rehabilitative care in order to prevent the trauma that they have suffered from defining them and condemning them to a life of further exploitation and abuse. Aggressive prosecution of the traffickers is also a must, as organized crime will always gravitate towards whatever activity is most lucrative and least risky.

Moreover, as this resolution points out, it is our sincere hope that South

Africa will follow up with prosecution of any soccer fans or other tourists caught exploiting women and children. The buyers of trafficking victims are responsible for this human misery, for without demand, these women and children would not be slaves.

I believe that the games are just the beginning for South Africa in its fight against human trafficking. We have seen tremendous investment of resources, will, and anti-trafficking momentum from nongovernmental organizations and faith-based organizations in the lead-up to the games. Cape Town Tourism, International Union of Superiors General and the Southern

African Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, Red Card 2010 Campaign, and the Tshwane Countertrafficking Coalition for 2010 are just a few of those who have stepped up to combat this modern day slavery.

South African citizens have been widely warned about the dangers of human trafficking, and many have volunteered in the fight. Human trafficking is in the public eye now, and it is time for the Government of South Africa to purge it from its cities and anywhere else that it is found. I thank my good friend for yielding and urge Members to support the resolution.